



"The late Elmer Apperson, builder of America's first mechanically successful gasoline motor car."

"Edgar Apperson, co-builder of America's first car and President of the Apperson Brothers Automobile Company."

# The Exact Facts Concerning Who Actually Built the First Mechanically Successful American Automobile

A Statement by the Apperson Bros. Automobile Co.

The first mechanically successful American automobile!

Who built it?

This statement is to establish the true facts once and for all.

An erroneous impression has been gained by a few that a controversy exists relative to the "First Car" matter.

We wish now to publicly announce that this is not true.

Here are all the facts—the actual facts—and nothing else.

In the early nineties, Elmer and Edgar Apperson operated a machine shop in Kokomo, Indiana.

At the same time Elwood Haynes was associated with the Natural Gas Company of Portland, Indiana.

One day the thought came to Mr. Haynes that a gasoline vehicle would have untold economic possibilities in America.

It should be remembered that certain inventors in Europe had already been at work on the idea of the gasoline automobile. For example, the famous Benz cars had been operating for quite a while.

Thus it was Elwood Haynes, who initiated the idea which developed into the first mechanically successful American made motor car.

However, the most important step of anyone who has found a new idea is to locate the brains and ability which will enable the development of the idea in a practical manner, so it can become a reality.

So in this instance the best and most practical mechanics were sought.

Messrs. Elmer and Edgar Apperson were selected as being the most competent.

At this time they owned the Riverside Machine Works, which was located on the site of one of our present plants.

It was here that the idea was discussed and developed by the three men.

The final outcome of these meetings was the building, by the Apperson Brothers, for Elwood Haynes, of the car destined to become famous.

The actual mechanical work on this first car was done by the Apperson Brothers and their employees.

The Apperson Brothers constructed and assembled with their own hands this first car.

The motor was a small launch type, purchased from a marine motor company.

The speed transmission, which included four individual clutches, was of the ordinary lathe clutch type and was bought at Dayton, Ohio.

These clutches were adapted to the job by the Appersons.

It was at this time that the Appersons designed the first contracting band clutch, by means of which the power of the motor was applied to the driving mechanism. The car also was provided with compensating gears.

Today many of the fundamental units and actions of this original car are still in use. Of course, they have been greatly refined, but the basic principles in many cases remain the same.

The point we wish to make—the point which we are entitled to make—the point, we believe, the public believes we are entitled to make, is that much of the initial engineering work, and actual process of building and assembling the car was done by the Apperson Brothers—by their own brains and with their own hands.

They were the engineers to design and produce the first suc-

cessful American made motor car of the internal combustion type.

That car—America's first car, was a success from the start. When it was pulled into the country for its trial trip, it actually ran!

Inasmuch as the material and labor entering into the construction of this car were paid for by Elwood Haynes, it became his property. He presented it to the Smithsonian Institution at Washington, D. C., where it is now on exhibition, placarded as follows:—

"Gasoline automobile built by Elwood Haynes in Kokomo, Indiana, 1893-1894. Successful trial trip made at a speed of six or seven miles per hour, July 4, 1894.

"Gift of Elwood Haynes, 1910. 262,135."

Yet in its issue of April 14, 1920, the New York Globe published the following:—

"With the death of Elmer Apperson a short time ago the automobile industry loses a man who has been an important factor in its development from the very beginning. There has been some controversy as to whether Elmer Apperson or Elwood Haynes was responsible for the first American Automobile. Suffice it to say here, however, that no matter whether it was Elwood Haynes or Elmer Apperson who furnished the idea for the car now on exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, labelled 'America's First Car,' there is no doubt that it was built by the Apperson Brothers in the Riverside Machine Works. Later the Apperson boys, in association with Elwood Haynes formed the first American company for the production of motor cars—the Haynes-Apperson Company. Later, the Appersons withdrew from the first organization and organized their own manufacturing company. Through all his life—and he was only fifty-eight years old—the soul of Elmer Apperson was in the building of automobiles. His death removes not only a pioneer of the industry but a useful citizen and an honorable man."

Also in confirmation of this same fact, Edward M. Souder, editor of the Kokomo Tribune and boyhood playmate of the Apperson Brothers, in a "Memory" written at the time of Elmer Apperson's death, had the following to say:—

"Elmer Apperson's business career had its real beginning in 1889 when he founded the Riverside Machine Works. That unpretentious plant became actually, though not in name, the first automobile factory in America, for it was there after plans suggested by Elwood Haynes, that he, in association with his brother, Edgar, built the first gasoline motor car constructed in this country. This car is in existence today comprising part of the mechanical exhibit in the Smithsonian Institution in the city of Washington."

With Elmer and Edgar Apperson there was associated with Elwood Haynes, John Maxwell, for whom some years later the now famous Maxwell automobile was named.

Thus we give all the facts concerning the conception, creation and construction of America's first mechanically successful motor car.

In 1898 the Haynes-Apperson Company was incorporated and a factory built to produce automobiles. This was the first regularly incorporated company in the United States for the manufacture of motor cars.

Elmer Apperson was General Manager of this Company and Edgar Apperson, General Superintendent.

This association continued for three years, at which time the Appersons withdrew to form their own company.

As time went on the Apperson Brothers gave to the world many notable engineering motor car

improvements, the most noteworthy of which are as follows:—

- They designed and built the first double opposed motor;
- Built the first car with a float feed carburetor;
- Built the first car with electric ignition;
- Built the first gasoline motor car engine to win an award in America;
- Built the car that won the first American speed contest;
- Built the car that made the first 100-mile non-stop run in America;
- Built the car that made the first long overland American tour;
- Built the two American cars that won first and second in the first Automobile Club of America run;
- Built their first four-cylinder car in 1903;
- Built their first six-cylinder car in 1907;
- Built their first eight-cylinder car in 1914;
- Built and designed the first "Chummy" roadster body;
- Built now the first eight-cylinder motor with eighty less parts.

From this humble beginning in 1894 developed the present gigantic American automotive industry.

From this initial conception and creation, which cost about \$750 to build by hand, we find today billions of dollars worth of automobiles in use in the United States.

Since 1893 and 1894 the Appersons continually and consistently have built better and better automobiles. They put into practice their basic and fundamental designs that are today in use by the entire automobile industry.

The purpose of making public this full announcement of all the facts is to make clear everyone's position.

Just as there can be no doubt as to who conceived the first car, neither can there be any doubt as to who created and constructed it.

June Twelve,  
Kokomo, Indiana.

Apperson Bros. Automobile Co.